

Search the Scriptures

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. (John 5:39-40)

How is it that so many people can read from the same book yet come away believing it means so many different things? Yet that's what the many denominations of Christianity must look like to many people. They're like members of a choir all reading from the same piece of music, yet singing very different songs. Most of them just don't know, don't understand what it is they're looking at.

This is what Jesus told the Jews of His day. They were reading the Scriptures, searching them, diligently studying them, even memorizing the words. In those words they believed there was a message, a set of instructions, directions that would lead them to eternal life with God.

And they were right—sort of. They were looking in the right place, but not for the right thing. The Scriptures have not been given to us to be savored as fine literature, nor researched as historical resources, nor followed as a guidebook to virtuous living (though they are valuable and reliable for all those things and more). The Scriptures have been given to us by God to reveal to us the person, the life, and the work of His dear Son, our Lord and Savior: Jesus Christ.

It is they that bear witness about me, Jesus said. The Scriptures show us our sad and sinful condition, reveal the wondrous works and ways of God, unveil His plans for our salvation, and point us to Jesus. It's all there in the book. He gave it to us because He wants us to know about it, to trust in it, to rejoice and hold fast to the hope and promise He gives us: in Jesus.

Yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. Sadly, many do refuse. Most won't even crack open the book to see what God has to say. (This leads to a lot of people misjudging and misquoting a book they've never read!) Many who do read it want to read God's Word their own way, most often as an 'instruction manual' for how they're supposed to 'earn' their way into heaven. They'll pick out the parts they like and ignore the rest.

Even among faithful church-going people, the Bible often remains a closed book. People say it's too complicated. Too confusing. Too long. Too time consuming. Too hard to understand.

Well, they're right—in a way. The Bible is hard to understand *completely*. No matter how many times the most faithful and learned scholars study its words, there always remains something more to be learned! God's Word is like an unceasing fountain of water, a spring that never stops flowing, continuing to quench thirst—and how thirsty we do get in this dry, dusty, sin-filled world!

But avoiding difficulty doesn't deal with it. Better for us to search the Scriptures and seek Jesus! For, to quote Pastor Frederik Herzberger, "No mortal, and if he live to be as old as Methuselah, will ever outgrow his need of the Bible, for he will never outgrow his need of the Savior. God make and keep us diligent and prayerful students of His holy Word!" (*The Family Altar*, CPH, 1922, 50)